Something Borrowed

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Something Borrowed

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Summary

“What’s wrong with your green card?” Will can’t hope to stop the words from tumbling forth - didn’t even know they were about to spill from his mouth when he opened it - and his cheeks flush when he realizes how intrusive and presumptuous that question is.

Notes

Day 23 of AU_Gust Prompts is: Arranged Marriage

The story that was almost titled "Will Graham & the terrible, awful, no good, very bad day."

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

Today is *not* Will Graham's day. He woke up to dog sick all over the floor, for one, an unpleasant surprise for his bare feet and sleep-hazed mind. A stroll into the kitchen enlightens him as to the culprit; Buster must be feeling better after having purged himself, because the terrier of terror had promptly returned to gnawing at the garbage he'd managed to free from the bin overnight.

It was a wonder Will hadn't heard the commotion, but he supposes four fingers of whiskey in an already sleep-deprived body was enough to keep him out for the scant few hours of sleep he'd managed. He's grateful, at least, that it was enough to drown out the nightmares. If his sleep was plagued by antlers and angels and a killer that won't stay dead, he doesn't remember any of it.

Small favors.

He'd already slept later than advised, and dealing with the dog situation was enough to officially push Will from the territory of *cutting it close* to *fuck, I'm late.* He took his morning coffee on the road, all hope of any sort of *actual* food until lunch now only a wistful and unattainable concept, and then slopped some all over his lap when some chucklefuck cut him off at his exit for Quantico, having decided at the last minute to cut across three lanes of traffic in their haste to get off the highway. By that point in his commute the temperature was tolerable, at least; not conducive to any *physical* damage. The only injury was to his pride, his cheeks warm as he was forced to stroll into his classroom - *late,* if only *just* so - with a darkened, damp splotch directly over the crotch and upper thighs of his trousers.

His pants dried throughout the day, but the lingering scent of java never quite left him, and Will knew that if *he* could smell it, his therapist would *certainly* be able to. That, combined with the shame that twisted sickly within him when he glanced in the mirror at the end of his day to find what an absolute *wreck* he appeared, was enough to convince him to go back to Wolf Trap to shower and change before his evening therapy session.

He's very stern with himself, mentally, over the fact that he would do this for *any* appointment he might have had on his schedule. And the fact that the time slot in question happens to be reserved for put-together, immaculate, ridiculously handsome *Hannibal Lecter* has absolutely no bearing on this decision whatsoever. He leaves Wolf Trap freshly groomed, dressed in unstained clothes that aren't wrinkled from all-day wear, feeling better with himself than he had all day.

Until he remembers that Baltimore is a solid hour away *on the best of days,* and rush hour traffic is a thing. By the time he's pulling onto the 495, he already knows he'll be at least ten minutes late. Adding insult to injury, he'd neglected to charge his phone all day and now it sits dead, a useless brick in his cup holder, so he can't even call ahead to apologize and forewarn his therapist.

His stomach twists at the thought, heart palpitating as his hands match the uneven beat in an impatient tap on his steering wheel. Hannibal *detests* tardiness, and for all of Will Graham's rough edges, he's been proud up until this point to say that is one facet of Doctor Lecter's cherished etiquette that he hasn't managed to breach.

He finally makes it into the city proper, though the insides of his cheeks are shredded from the anxious gnawing of his teeth, and things seem to finally be looking up for him when Will takes the chance of scoping out the street of Hannibal's office and miraculously finds a parking spot only half a block away. He's sweaty and breathless when he tears into the waiting room, not bothering to knock as he barrels forth into the office with an earnest apology on his lips.

Words that choke and die in his throat when he discovers that his therapist is not waiting on him, bored and impatient, but engaged in a rather serious-looking discourse with a tall, lanky man in an ill-fitting suit.

Will can spot a fed when he sees one, even if it's not one from his sector of the FBI, and his tongue feels thick as he trips over an apology of a different kind, excusing himself back to the waiting room with burning cheeks and the brief glimpse of utter, humanizing *resignation* Will catches in Hannibal's eyes.

More than that, the words that had filtered into his awareness before he'd swifty cut off the conversation, repeating in a vast and hollow echo in his mind:

- should have applied for citizenship. You're welcome to an immigration lawyer -

He paces an agitated circle in the waiting room, minding spinning and gut churning as he deduces that which is obvious, but is wholly unpalatable to him. There's something wrong with Hannibal's green card.

The fed must leave via the patient exit on the other side of the office, because a few minutes later Hannibal is opening the door to him with a welcoming and apologetic smile. "I'm terribly sorry about that, Will. You were tardy and he was quite insistent upon speaking with me immediately."

"My phone died," Will blurts dumbly. "And - traffic," he tacks on like an idiot.

"It's quite alright," Hannibal assures him, reading the apology between the lines and guiding him into the office with a warm, solid hand on his low back. "These things happen. We're getting started a bit late, but as you're my last appointment I'm happy to extend our session to the full hour -"

"What's wrong with your green card?" He can't hope to stop the words from tumbling forth - didn't even know they were about to spill from his mouth when he opened it - and his cheeks flush when he realizes how intrusive and presumptuous that question is.

Hannibal doesn't balk at Will's rudeness, merely offers him a small smile, as though he had expected the question. "A minor snafu with my re-application process. It's nothing that won't

get sorted out, but it looks as though I'll need to leave the country for the time being while we do so."

"You can't leave," Will blurts out, because apparently there is a systematic disconnect between his brain and his tongue today.

"It won't be permanent, Will, I assure you. I agree that it's terribly inconvenient, both socially and for my practice, but this is the way the government operates -"

But Will is already shaking his head in denial, and when he speaks again he's horrified to find that his voice is thick with emotion, building tears stinging his eyes. "You *can't.* I'm - Hannibal I'm - I'm *seeing* things, I'm *sleepwalking.* My anxiety is through the roof and I feel like I'm losing my mind and I can't - I can't do this without you."

Hannibal's features soften at the admission, and it only further threatens to cause his tears to overwhelm him and spill down his cheeks. "Will -" he begins, but Will isn't ready to hear a lecture about how severely he's downplayed his recent symptoms - or worse, a *diagnosis.*

"I can't deal with this alone, Hannibal," Will admits, his voice weak and thready. "And don't say I have Jack or Alana or any of the others, because *you know* they don't understand me like you do. You know they'll look at me and what I'm experiencing and -" Will chokes off the sentence before his traitorous tongue can utter the words *commit me.* "Draw the wrong conclusions."

"I can hardly refuse the government their demands, Will," Hannibal reasons gently. "What would you propose I do?"

And maybe the spark of this absurd idea is drawn from just that implicative word; perhaps it was a solution that had been ready at the back of his mind, simply awaiting an opening to burst forth.

"Marry me."

And Hannibal Lecter, for all his grand verbose metaphors and allusions, blinks at Will.

"I mean it," Will tacks on in response to Hannibal's stunned silence, mind churning and slotting details into place even as his enthusiasm for the impulsive solution grows and he paces forward to remove some of the distance between them. "Marry me. We'll - we can make it all go away."

Will sees the shift in Hannibal's expression when the man comes to fully realize just how *serious* Will is, sees the look shining in his eyes and knows it's something akin to sadness and resignation. He holds his breath, lungs straining with the effort, and waits for Hannibal to tell him how foolish he's being. How inappropriate the suggestion is.

That Will has grown too close, too dependent upon him. He waits for some line about transference and referrals. His heart seizes and then immediately starts to race when Hannibal says none of this and instead responds:

“The timing of that would look terribly suspicious, Will.”

“Fuck the timing,” he blurts, pacing closer still. He’s heartened, at least, by the fact that Hannibal does nothing to discourage the lack of distance. “We’ll figure it out. We can - we can make it work. I know we can.”

Hannibal’s head tilts to the side, as Will has seen him do countless times while he contemplates something particularly interesting or puzzling. “Barring any... *complications* to our friendship,” he begins, words measured and paced as though each one is falling from his tongue without the intricate levels of deduction and analyzing that normally surrounds Hannibal’s speech, “There are processes put into place to discourage such actions, Will. Invasion into one’s life to verify the legitimacy of a marriage, rigorous interviews designed by experts in this field to detect any anomaly in our story, set to prey upon and pick apart any inaccuracy -”

“You play the harpsichord,” Will blurts out, unthinking. Even as his mind sluggishly begins to turn over where this exclamation originated from, his tongue is still twisting and spilling out brash and incoherent ramblings. “It’s your favorite instrument, after the theremin, but you talk about and play that one less because most people don’t understand the delicate touch and dedication that goes along with such an unconventional instrument. You take your coffee with one sugar and no cream, only drink tea when served warm, and *always* take your scotch neat, though most of the time you default to wine if you’re going to imbibe. You prefer reds but you’re happy to serve white, if the meal demands it.”

Hannibal’s eyes shine, and Will doesn’t want to attempt to process if the expression is pride or affection, if the wetness that brims them is due to happiness or defeat. He shakes his head when Hannibal’s lips part, talking over any airspace the other man might attempt to claw for himself. He’s too afraid of Hannibal talking him down from this, too afraid of him succeeding.

Too afraid of him leaving.

“You get season tickets to the Baltimore Opera House every year, and in over a decade haven’t missed a single production. You always hold a box seat, but you prefer to sit with the main crowd to get the full experience. And because the acoustics are better and you’re someone that appreciates aesthetics above and beyond all.” Will takes a final step, drawing himself nearly toe to toe with Hannibal, his words thick and catching in his throat, and when he continues, he finds he’s burned through the frantic rebuttal of facts and figures, speaking instead from that private well of emotion deep within him that only Hannibal seems capable of accessing.

“You know me better than anyone, despite how much I hate talking about myself. You understand the way I think, the way I feel all the time...sometimes better than *I* do. And in spite of what you see...you care for me. Maybe just as a friend, but it’s *there;* a connection, an acceptance no one else can offer. And I can’t...I can’t lose that. *You.* Even if it’s only presumably for *a little while.”*

Will wets his lips, bone-dry with his nervousness, though every other inch of him feels as though it’s beaded in sweat. He swallows around the lump in his throat and forces himself to

raise his gaze to meet Hannibal's, his chest growing warm and tight when he's met with the unrestrained, unabashed expression of adoration.

"I can't lose you," Will repeats, on a soft breath this time rather than the brash outrage that colored his tone initially. He reaches out, tentatively at first, but growing bolder when Hannibal makes no move to stop him or shift away. He first grips at Hannibal's lapels, though his hands slide down quickly enough until the siren call of the doctor's warmth proves too great and Will is sliding his fingers beneath the jacket, wrapping them gingerly around Hannibal's waist.

He tilts his head up to face the man before him, body thrumming with a sudden, unexpected desire and eyes half-lidded as they blink up to Hannibal's own. "Don't make me," he entreats softly, his breath catching as Hannibal's own face tilts down to close the remaining distance between them.

He moans into the kiss, can't not, overwhelmed by the turn this night has taken. Even as he'd suggested this ludicrous plan, even as his chaotic mind had attempted to frantically parse out all the particulars of the unlikely endeavor, he'd never actually considered that Hannibal might be interested in making this sham marriage relevant in more than one way. He parts his lips for Hannibal's tongue, shudders and moans again as it delves into his mouth to stroke along his own tongue, inspect his teeth.

He presses closer, melts into Hannibal's touch when his hands seek out Will to cradle him with a possessive comfort that sends his heart racing; firm fingers at his hip, a gentle palm cradling his jaw, tilting his head into a more favorable position, opening Will further to Hannibal's ministrations.

He's breathless and trembling when they part, voice too strained to allow for casual humor when his lips twist into a smirk and he murmurs, "Is that a yes, then?"

"It's more than a yes," Hannibal replies softly, his own voice low and thick. His smile twists down, the space between his brows creasing in a frown that reminds Will of Hannibal's humanity. It's easy to paint the doctor as larger than life, nearly preternatural with his control and effortless stoicism. It's rare to see such a look of concerned contemplation on his features. "But we'll need to delay the celebrations, I'm afraid. There are more pressing matters than even my imminent deportation with which to contend."

Will frowns at that, but Hannibal continues speaking before he can even open his mouth to question him. "You're burning up, Will. And you smell of...I'm not sure what, exactly. It's a bit like a fevered sweetness. I suspect we need to make an appointment with a neurologist post-haste. I have a colleague whom I'm sure could fit us into his schedule without delay."

Confusion grips Will, even as anxiety surges through him like a tidal wave. "Hannibal…" he finally manages to squeak out between the doctor's mental notes made verbal. "What…"

"You're not crazy, Will," Hannibal assures him, warm hands cupping his face softly and urging Will's wild and panicked eyes to meet his own. "You're sick."

Will takes in Hannibal's declaration with a blank stare, an antagonistic piece of his brain mocking him for beginning to think this day could have *possibly* been getting *better*.

Hannibal's lips meet his brow, and Will understands now what the doctor meant about the state of his temperature. His kiss is cool and soothing, but in a way Will vaguely understands *shouldn't* be.

"We'll determine the cause of the fevers and neurological symptoms and get through whatever it is, Will," Hannibal assures him softly, tilts his face up to press another chaste kiss to Will's lips. "I'm counting on you to save me from Lithuania, after all."

Will huffs a laugh at that, can't not, and finds the courage to open his eyes, to turn them upon his friend, partner - *fiance* - feeling much more assured of Hannibal's words when he does. They *will* get through whatever is going on, because whatever it is, they'll face it *together*.

And together they're unstoppable.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> Something Borrowed was one of our favorite AU_Gust prompts and we are so happy to be able to offer this continuation to you guys! Happy Holidays, and we are sending you and yours the best vibes for a (hopefully better than 2020) new year! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It takes Will a matter of weeks to figure out Hannibal is the Ripper. With the fire in his brain now reduced to a slow simmer by the endless regimen of medications he's on - that his *husband* put him on - everything becomes far clearer and he wonders how he hadn't seen it before.

Hannibal Lecter - Lecter- *Graham* - isn't subtle. He's nearly Faustian, thinking himself so clever and above it all. Will feels equal parts annoyed and also still so painfully intrigued; it's such a novel concept to find someone who *knows you,* who *sees* you like no one else can.

The most surprising of revelations to dawn on him lies in the fact that he can't seem to muster up the energy or effort to *care.* At most he feels a vague and inconsistent irritation toward Hannibal for being able to so effortlessly achieve what Will never could; slipping beneath suspicion to terrorize Baltimore and the FBI for *years* while Will only dreamt of passing for *normal.* There is, of course, the inarguable mortification lingering at the edges of his consciousness; that Hannibal had flitted so close to the edge of Will's radar without ever sending off a warning bell but, in fact, only drew him in with the promise of being interesting and the inescapable and wholly welcome feeling of *acceptance.*

Really, Will should have seen it much sooner.

Hannibal makes him happy - happy in a way that no one else ever has and, Will suspects, ever could. And with each milestone passed as they sign papers, exchange bands, discuss the logistics of moving in together, their sham marriage begins to feel less like something hastily assembled on the bedrock of a forgery and more like... *a relationship.*

And Will isn't ready to give that up, regardless of criminal history or dietary preference.

After all, *some* people were married to partners that left their wet bath towels on the floor, or drank milk straight from the carton, or snored obnoxiously loud. What's a little light cannibalism in the face of all that? Granted, for all Will knows, Hannibal *does* snore obscenely loudly, and all the night through. Though that seems like one of those traits that only *imperfect* people have, and Will can't at all imagine Hannibal being *that.*

Still, though, he can't help but wonder if he *does* snore, or make *any* sort of sleep sounds at all, or if he's as still and silent in repose as he is during the day. He finds himself wondering

if he sleeps in pajamas or dressed down or - Good Lord help the blush that burns his cheeks - in the nude. Does he hog the covers? Seek comfort in the proximity of others, or keep his distance?

Would he wake Will with tender kisses and wandering hands? Bring him breakfast in bed? Will he ever give Will a chance to find out, or only continue stubbornly bidding Will a firm goodnight as he's guided to the door at the end of their sessions, after dinner. One time, one of the *rare* times they had dinner in Wolf Trap, Will had attempted to extend an invitation for Hannibal to stay the night. It was a veiled suggestion, granted, Will remarking upon the hour, the distance back to Baltimore, the light sleet that had begun to fall about an hour previous.

But Hannibal is a clever man, and surely doesn't need Will to actually *ask* him if he wants to stay and have sex. So when he didn't, Will watched him go in silence, swallowing down his disappointment and fighting back the irrational feeling of abandonment and rejection. They'd kissed a few times, but that was hardly an indication that Hannibal wanted *more* from him. That he wanted it *all.*

Fuck, Will wants it all though.

"Earth to Graham?" Beverly's voice cuts in through his thoughts as he watches Hannibal walking towards them across the cafeteria of Quantico. He looks so hopelessly out of place in his *loud* patterned suit and holding his lunch carrier. They were having lunch together to make their sham marriage more believable, but also in order to plan out logistics of relocating. Will can't really envision himself and all seven of his dogs taking up residence at Hannibal's lavish Baltimore house, but Hannibal seems hell-bent on convincing him.

"God you have moon eyes. I might throw up." Bev laughs, and Will looks over at her, a little crooked smile on his lips. People had been surprisingly quick to believe their marriage, it helps that both he and Hannibal are excellent at convincing others of their earnest trustworthiness. If Will is right - which he knows he is - and Hannibal is the Ripper, he's had all of them fooled all along, right under their noses.

"I didn't marry him just for his looks. He's bringing me lunch." Will smiles wider when Hannibal reaches them, leans down to peck a kiss to Will's cheek and then takes a seat beside him.

"Miss Katz, how lovely to see you. I'm afraid I only brought enough for myself and Will as I wasn't aware you'd be joining us. I'd love to have you over for dinner sometime to make up for it."

Will can *hear* the puns now, and he makes a mental note to remind himself to tell Hannibal that Beverly is off the table *and* the menu.

With Hannibal's spider web of connections to the Baltimore elite,, it had been easy enough for him to get a judge to visit Will while he'd still been in the hospital but out of the woods, labeled *of sound mind* by an unbiased psychiatrist who hadn't also been his *fiance.* As such, they've now officially been joined together in *wedded bliss* for six weeks, even though Will has only been out of the hospital for three of them.

Six weeks a husband and *still* no consummation to show for it.

He shakes that train of thought away and forces himself to tune into the conversation blitzing right by him, just in time to catch his *darling husband* utter the words -

"- rather *small* affair, no more than two or three dozen."

"I'm honored to be counted among them," Bev rejoins even as Will is still blinking and attempting to play catch-up to what he missed. "Well, more *excited* than anything, really. I hear your dinner parties are the stuff of *legends."*

"Dinner party?" Will murmurs, flushing simultaneously at the wry smirk Bev shoots his way and the placating pat Hannibal grants his knee as his own lips pull into a reassuring smile.

"To celebrate our nuptials, darling," Hannibal explains, his voice thick and sweet as syrup as though to gently remind Will that he's heard all this before.

Foggy as his memory may still sometimes be in the wake of his infection, Will is fairly certain the two of them haven't discussed how they might announce their news at large, and they most *certainly* did not agree upon a *dinner party* to do so.

He thinks back to the last party of Hannibal's he'd been to, though at the time the festivities in question hadn't even begun. He'd stood underdressed and embarrassed as a full staff of waiters and chefs ran circles around him, clinging to a cheaper-than-not bottle of red and grasping for any excuse possible to see himself from the man's home before his *actual* guests showed up and he made an ass of himself.

He'd settled for announcing he had a date with the Chesapeake Ripper, and his face flames anew as he realizes how *pleased* that must have made Hannibal, how *amusing* he must have found it.

"Uh. When?" Is all he can manage beyond the panic that begins to flood him.

Because this party won't be like the last one, where Hannibal had assured him he could float under the radar and still enjoy himself. This one will be one *they* host. Hannibal and Will *Lecter-Graham.* Will won't be the unknown, twitchy man keeping to himself in the corner; he'll be the *husband.* The rather *unexpected,* bright, shiny, *new* - the gossip of high society, if even for a week, and the thought of fielding all the questions and demands for stories of *how did you meet* and *how long have you been together,* and *where have you been hiding* enough to terrify him even more than their upcoming interview - interrogation - with the immigration officer assigned to their case.

"Not for a few weeks yet," Hannibal assures him. "We'll get you settled into the house first, of course -"

"Ha! Nice try. You can't just try to *slip* stuff like that into the conversation and hope I'll finally end up agreeing with it, you know. We've *discussed* this, Hannibal -"

"And it was my understanding we were meeting today to *continue* the discussion."

“On that note,” Bev interjects with enthusiastic awkwardness as she stands from her seat and collects her lunch tray, “I’ll be seeing myself out. Have a good day, love birds.” She departs with a wink that Will can only describe as *saucy* and then leaves him alone to fend for himself against his husband, the absolute *traitor.*

His ire thaws slightly at Hannibal’s murmured *alone at last* as he subtly shifts closer to Will, pressed flush together from hip to knee, and desire pools warm and aching in Will’s belly once more as the scent of Hannibal’s spiced and woody cologne drifts closer to choke him.

“I promise you, you will resent the fact that I have seven dogs sooner rather than later. I can’t just give them up, Hannibal.”

“Nor would I ask you to,” Hannibal rejoins immediately, his tone clipped and cold as though Will merely *thinking* so is offensive. “I know what your pack means to you, Will, and I’ve come to adore each and every one of them as well. There’s space enough in the garden for a kennel. Enclosed, heated; they’ll want for nothing, my heart. It will be an adjustment for us all, but I’m more than willing to alter what I’ve known of my life to accommodate making a place for you in it.”

Will stares at Hannibal - his *husband* - touched and speechless. That a man such as him - so concerned with order and control in all things - is willing to upend his entire *existence* just for Will...it’s unfathomable.

All at once, he’s filled with a giddy excitement, and he turns away from Hannibal’s gaze to stab at a bite of *flank steak,* bringing it to his mouth quickly to conceal the smirk that threatens to twitch at the edges of his lips. “...Okay.”

“Okay?”

Hannibal’s tone is no less than *dumbstruck,* and it’s such an incongruous sound in relation to the man it slips from that Will can’t hope to stop the grin his lips stretch into. He nudges his body playfully against Hannibal’s as he goes for another forkful. *“Okay,”* he relents dramatically, a little bit louder. “You win. Damnitall.”

“Well, I’m glad you’ve finally come around. I was wondering when you’d get out of your own head and see some sense. You see, Will -”

Will shuts his husband up with a bite of food at his lips followed by an *insistent* kiss, and chuckles when the action not only shuts Hannibal up but renders him unable to do anything else but chase Will’s lips for another taste.

He’s pulled from the bubble of *them* that’s formed a protective shield from the outside world when he notices Bev approaching their table once again. “Did you find some dramamine? I thought all the *moon eyes* were making you simply *nauseous*... what is it?”

His playful mood dies when he registers the tight expression on Bev’s usually carefree face, his anxiety only growing as he senses Hannibal growing more somber at his side as well.

“Nicholas Boyle.”

Will's stomach twists at the name, dread sitting heavy within it as his heart begins to beat a bit faster. "They found him?" Even as he speaks the words he somehow *knows* he isn't referring to the young man in question being in police custody. Somehow he knows even before Bev says the words that a whole new can of worms has been cracked open and dumped upon the ground.

"Yeah, they found him. He's dead. It's pretty clear he was murdered. Gutted."

Like a deer, Will's fucked up mind can't help but fill in the rest of the sentence. He's not sure where the words come from, doesn't want to think about what they mean.

"He's frozen solid - hard to get a timeline. We'll know a bit more when he thaws out. He's - the body's being brought in from Minnesota. I'll let you know when it arrives."

Will nods, his tongue thick and mind numb, no hope for words at all. Bev must sense this, because she passes an apologetic look between both him and Hannibal. "Sorry to ruin the lunch date. Jack wanted you to know straight away."

Will nods again, blinking himself back into existence, pulling the stretched pieces of himself together firmly once more. "Let me know when the body gets here," he requests, realizing even as he says the words that Bev already assured him she would do so.

She doesn't point this out, simply nods once before turning away and leaving him alone with his husband. It's Hannibal's warm, comforting hand upon his back that pulls him fully back to himself, and Will shudders beneath the grounding touch as though he's a piece of machinery springing back to life.

"Are you alright, darling?"

"Yeah, just...surprised, I guess. Always figured he was out there, somewhere. Not…" *Dead. Gutted.*

Like a deer.

He turns to Hannibal as he recalls the night the young man went missing to begin with. "Just surprised, not...not *disturbed* or anything. He was dangerous, after all. He attacked you."

The *you* could imply the group at large, Abigail, Hannibal and Alana, but Will knows as the word slips from his lips that it's solely meant for Hannibal.

"Yes," Hannibal agrees solemnly.

And in light of the declaration, gazing at his husband so closely and knowing full well what he is, Will can't help but think -

Liar.

It's cold in the morgue, colder even than the earth they'd dug Nick Boyle out of. The man lays on a sterile, metal slab, something about his presence taunting and almost infuriating. This man had attacked his family, had *threatened them.* No matter whether Will knows Hannibal is lying about the details of the assault, he believes Nick isn't innocent in all this.

When he looks down at him he feels a myriad of emotions, but finds anger isn't the thing that surfaces in the end as the loudest. No, more than anything else he feels pity. And pity has no place amongst the dead. Pity is for the living, and Will has had more than his fair share of it. He hates pity, nearly as much as a darker voice in the halls of his mind hates Boyle.

"It's precise but also seems abrupt. The person who did this wasn't expecting him, but they gutted him without hesitation. And professionally enough I'd say they had to have extensive experience."

"Like a hunter, perhaps?" Jack asks, but it isn't really a question and they both know it. Jack already has his mind made up about Nick, probably already had thoughts about his disappearance before they'd even known to be looking for a body.

"A hunter, a fisherman. Someone in the medical field, maybe." Will presses on, ignoring Jack's eye roll. "He's our victim but this looks like it wasn't planned. It feels like a defensive wound."

"You think he attacked someone and ended up dead?" Jack's voice is disbelieving, but Will can see the hint of uncertainty in his eyes. It would be cleaner, neater, if someone had just killed Nicholas Boyle and they could end it there. Adding context meant needing more explanations, *reasons,* and Jack was a man of action and results. He didn't like to dwell in the *why,* he preferred to focus on how to put an end to the *how.*

"Abigail didn't do this, Jack. She's what, a hundred ten pounds? And she's been hospitalized for weeks. This took strength and a level head."

"Abigail remains a suspect in her father's murders and isn't some lost puppy for you to adopt and take home to your pack, Will. She's dangerous and more than capable of this." He gestures at the body and huffs when Will doesn't respond.

"Will I know you've grown… *fond* of her, but she's not some project for you to fix. And she's not just some innocent kid. She was raised by a monster."

"Nature versus nurture," Will murmurs absently as he gazes into the ruin of Nicholas Boyle's torso.

"There's no *versus* about it," Jack points out gruffly. "The *nurture* may be in her upbringing, but the *nature* is in her *blood.* The kid's been twice cursed; it's simple statistics."

Will scoffs, unable to repress the face he makes. *Statistics.* Abigail was cursed before she ever knew it, before she could have ever seen it coming. The stigma would follow her for the rest of her life, even if she *was* innocent, and Will knows she isn't, he just doesn't want Jack to know.

“I know plenty about *statistics,* Jack. Do you know the suicide rates for people with empathy disorders? The homicide rates?” The phrase *people like me* is left unsaid between them, but he can see Jack’s reaction, knows the man takes it for the thinly veiled accusation it is. If Will Graham’s broken mind is good enough to be deemed worthy by Jack Crawford and the FBI, why can’t he ignore Abigail’s past and consider her as a whole, individual person separate from her monstrous father?

Will supposes that saying about apples not falling far from trees has never been more apt as he sees himself out and makes his way to Hannibal’s office. It seems they need to talk.

In a gesture of unspeakable rudeness, Will strides into Hannibal’s office with neither invitation nor announcement. Hannibal glances up from his drawing, warmth filling him even as he calculates the rigid coldness of his husband’s regard. Will is, spouse or not, the only person that could barge into Hannibal’s sanctum in such a way and not inevitably find themselves on his dinner table because of it.

Will has just come from Quantico; Hannibal knows this because he can detect the pungent scent of a rotting corpse and the sterile burn of antiseptic - soaked into clothing and skin from his time in the BAU morgue. Hannibal longs to urge Will to accompany him to his home - soon to be Will’s, as well, he reminds himself with smug glee - so he might draw him a bath, wash away the offensive odors until all that remains is *Will.*

Will, for all his dark and seething ire, does not appear as though he currently wishes to be doted upon in such a way, and so Hannibal merely awaits his words. He’s unsurprised when they are bitten sharply from his love’s mouth, as though they are poison he must expel post-haste.

“Abigail Hobbs killed Nicholas Boyle.”

Hannibal, of course, sees the statement for what it is - less of a declaration and more of an offering - the man that voiced the epiphany desperately hoping for some refute to the claim. He longs to cajole his husband into good humor, wishes he could relent to Will’s desires and tell him he’s being silly, that *of course* Abigail did no such thing.

His regard and affection for Will outweighs every tactical move he might make at this juncture, and he finds himself instead replying, “Yes, I know.”

Will’s frame tenses even further at the words, his sharp eyes glaring daggers at the pencil Hannibal idly twirls between his fingers as his jaw clenches and neck strains and he pinches his eyes closed and asks, “Tell me *why* you know?”

In for a penny…

“I helped her dispose of the body.” He understands his own calm, detached tone is only further sending Will into a tailspin of outrage, but he finds himself unable to mask the evening’s events with lies or subterfuge any longer. Will is his *husband,* and he should know the truth of events.

As much truth as he can accept, at least.

"Evidently," Will growls, the words bitten out between gnashed teeth as he stalks closer to Hannibal's desk, "Not. Well. *Enough."*

It's almost surprising how fiercely Hannibal wishes to refute the oversimplified statement. But, above all else - even his own reputation - he longs to protect Abigail. The body in question, of course, would never have been discovered if someone hadn't intentionally unearthed it, and Hannibal has already spoken to Abigail in regards to *that* decision.

And beyond that, he *understands.* Brash as it was, he knows why Abigail chose to seize power for herself and reveal that which has haunted her every hour for *weeks.* He's almost uncomfortably familiar with the fear that lurks heavy and sick in the pit of one's stomach when they hold onto deceptions and facades, braced on the simple and flimsy hope that such things will never come to light, that they won't irrevocably stain the holder when they inevitably do.

"Have you told Jack Crawford?" Abigail will already be in custody if he has, out of reach of Hannibal's guidance, his protection. His stomach clenches unexpectedly at that particular train of thought. He reminds himself, not for the first time, that she might be the daughter of the Shrike, but she isn't *his little bird.* An imago best left in the snowy forests of his past.

Will's head twitches, the frown etched into his expression deepening, darkening, as he grunts out, "No."

"Why not?" Hannibal can't help but question, against his better judgement.

Will's shoulders drop slightly as some of the tension is invaded by something like defeat. "Because I was hoping it wasn't true."

"Well, now you know the truth."

Will gives a soft snort at that, his mouth opening before he reconsiders and clenches his jaw shut around words unspoken. He instead gives a silent shake of his head as his face twists into a scowl.

"Everything you know of that night is true, except for the end."

"You mean the part where my husband committed multiple felonies by acting as an accomplice to murder and then obstructed justice by lying about it."

"I wasn't your husband at the time," Hannibal points out; the humor is ill-timed - Will's certainly not in the mood for it - and Hannibal shifts gears fluidly, moving from his desk with the intention of placating his irate spouse both verbally *and* physically. "Labelling the act as *murder* has such negative connotations. *Justifiable homicide,* I believe, is the term one would use."

Will flinches away from Hannibal's presence when he draws closer, trekking obstinately to the window to keep some distance between them. He watches his husband's face somehow

contort even *further* into a frown as he glares through the lacy curtains. “I saw the body, Hannibal. There was nothing *justifiable* about what Abigail did, and you know it.”

“That’s not to say there wasn’t something justifiable about what *I* did,” Hannibal rejoins, and Will must not disagree, because his jaw clenches a bit tighter at the argument but he remains silent as well. Will is warming to the situation, albeit reluctantly, and Hannibal presses forward boldly, set on tempering Will’s acceptance the way one would temper molten steel. “Jack Crawford would hang her for what her father has done. You know that, Will. The world would burn her in his place simply because they *can,* because it’s easier to lay blame on someone alive and breathing rather than something as nebulous as the concept of a deceased person’s maliciousness. Abigail would spend the rest of her life paying for her father’s actions. That would be her story; that would be what Freddie Lounds writes.”

It’s a distasteful play, inciting Miss Lounds’ name to simultaneously rile Will and placate him, but he can’t deny that it works. Some of the tension slips from Will’s frame, his own admittance of defeat on the horizon, Hannibal suspects, and he chances moving closer once more, pleased when Will not only accepts the action but also allows Hannibal to lay a comforting and grounding hand to his shoulder, clasping it with tender firmness. *“We’re* her fathers now, Will. We have to serve her better than Garrett Jacob Hobbs.”

Will gives another bitter huff at that, shrugging out of Hannibal’s touch only when his body twists to level him with the full extent of his annoyed glare. *“Better,”* he repeats, at once amused and appalled. “Tell me how a fucked up empath and the Chesapeake Ripper are supposed to serve her *better.”*

The both of them freeze as soon as the words are spoken, time itself seemingly caught in amber as the accusation and epiphany continues to hover between them. Will, for all his indignant rage, stares placidly at Hannibal; awaiting his reaction, it seems, and unphased as to Hannibal’s lack of immediate denial as Hannibal himself remains still, though his mind sparks from thought to thought at a mile a minute, his every atom focused on the man before him, on the words he just said, replaying already in his Memory Palace the exact volume, tone and diction, breaking each down to decipher the intent and emotion behind them.

Another track of thought forms, one which sees Hannibal’s own multitude of reactions play out. The ones that end in Will’s death are derailed nearly as quickly as they begin, Hannibal knowing instinctively that it’s no true option. He would run first, if it came to that. In the end, he settles for something akin to denial, curiosity and temptation winning out as he finds himself craving more of Will’s words, accusatory or not.

“That’s a bold accusation, Will.”

“That’s hardly a *denial,* Doctor Lecter.”

The title rolls off Will’s tongue almost *flirtatiously,* the echo of every previous iteration resounding through the cadence of it. Will had reverted to using the words playfully long before he’d ended up asking Hannibal to marry him, and has only grown in his boldness since.

Hannibal feels emboldened himself, holding eye contact with his husband and watching from moment to moment as his icy stare thaws and warms first to a fond gaze and then an almost *longing* smolder. When Hannibal shifts forward, Will doesn't move except to tilt his head higher, keeping his eyes locked on Hannibal's.

"Lecter -*Graham,"* Hannibal reminds him, erasing the scant distance between them and tipping his lips down to Will's.

His husband allows the kiss, momentarily, but doesn't hesitate to continue firing the moment they part. "That was a cute way to bypass conflict, Hannibal," Will informs him softly. "But, unfortunately, ineffective. Do I have to say it again, or can we be adults and pretend like you won't deny it a second time if I do?"

This is not at all how Hannibal had imagined this conversation might go, not in the least because Will doesn't appear overly angry or appalled or betrayed. Merely *annoyed,* as though the fact that his husband is a serial killer cannibal is equatable more to a pebble in his shoe than an actual *problem.*

Hannibal is, cautiously, overjoyed at this realization. How wonderful it would be to not only *have* Will but for Will to have *him* as well - *all* of him - and accept him besides.

He can't help but steal another swift kiss, murmuring against his would-be lover's plush lips, "Say it again."

"I know you're the Chesapeake Ripper," Will tells him softly, though as he does he only draws closer to Hannibal, his hands slipping beneath Hannibal's jacket to curl his fists around Hannibal's waistcoat. "And the Copycat Killer. And probably responsible for at least a dozen other murders and missing persons the FBI hasn't been able to pin on anyone yet." Their chests brush together with every inhale, and Hannibal's eyes slip shut of their own volition as Will curls further against him and presses his face into the crook of his neck to nuzzle him briefly before pressing his lips against Hannibal's flesh.

"And I *see* you, Hannibal. I see you and *I'm. Still. Here."* Hannibal's fingers go tight against Will's hips and he pulls him closer until every part of them slots together perfectly, conjoined edges blurring into one. He uses his other hand to guide Will's face to his, palm resting against his jaw before he bites against Will's lips, suddenly ravenous, his desire insatiable as it courses through him.

Will feels like a fever, but not with the encephalitis that had so recently set his brain aflame, instead his heat comes from adrenaline, more than a little anger, and an equally hungry passion Hannibal sees reflected in tempest-tossed eyes. Will growls against Hannibal's mouth, giving just as much as he gets, and it only incenses Hannibal further. He guides them backwards by memory alone until they stand by Will's usual seat; so often the place where Hannibal would pick through his thoughts, collect memories like trinkets to hide away in his Memory Palace.

He pushes Will into the wide seat and slides seamlessly into his lap without hesitation, his knees slotting into place along the outside of Will's thighs. Even with how broad the seat of

the chair is, Hannibal's thighs press nearly painfully against the bars of the arms but he doesn't care, can't even feel it with how much he *wants*.

"Will -"

"Yes." Will interrupts him, wrapping a hand around Hannibal's nape and pulling him in again for another bruising, dizzying kiss. Hannibal doesn't need another affirmation, stands only long enough to remove his shoes, trousers and underwear, only barely able to take the few seconds to fold them neatly into the empty chair he usually occupies. He removes his socks and garters next, watching curiously at the dark gleam in Will's eyes as he watches Hannibal's fingers move along the garters with an animal focus. Intriguing, but an avenue to explore another time.

He works on Will's pants next, pulling them down his legs along with his underwear and his own shoes and socks. He treats the articles with the same care as his own clothing, sitting them neatly alongside his things. And then he's *finally* on his knees between Will's spread thighs, the man above him looking like a king at court, as though he's always been here, just like this, ready and waiting for Hannibal's worship.

Hannibal doesn't make either of them wait, leans forward and laps against Will's already leaking head, pulling his foreskin back enough to bury his tongue in his slit. Will groans above him, and Hannibal's stomach clenches in pleasure. He'd thought perhaps Will would punish him by denying him his sounds, would make Hannibal work for even the smallest sign of his enjoyment, but Will surprises him as he so often does, Hannibal never quite able to predict the mongoose under the stairs or the wolf in lamb's wool he'd seemingly ended up as.

"I'm still angry with you," Will growls above him, fingers curling roughly in Hannibal's hair and guiding him all the way down Will's shaft until his lips hit the base. He holds him there for several seconds, Hannibal's throat fluttering around him, and saliva dripping from the corners of his lips, and then he releases him, yanking him back up.

"I need you now, Will, please." Hannibal finds it surprisingly easy to plead his case earnestly and honestly, a novel experience for him as sex is usually simply another means for control of his narrative.

Will, it seems, might not be in a forgiving mood, but he's at least as desperate as Hannibal after weeks spent together but not *intimate,* and Hannibal is relieved when Will nods in agreement and uses his grip in Hannibal's hair to pull him back up into his lap.

"Get yourself ready for me." Will growls, and the sound is low and warning. It sends a chill of anticipation through Hannibal, and he can't help but press his luck trying to pry another puzzle piece from Will.

"Afraid you'll hurt me, dear Will?"

Disgust twists Will's features, though it makes him no less lovely, and he tightens his hold on Hannibal and forces him to maintain eye contact - another surprising turn of events for the usually elusive empath. "Neither of us are *that* kind of monster, Hannibal."

Hannibal hums his agreement, curiosity striking him again. “And what kind of monster are you, exactly, Will? Perhaps I was right from that very first breakfast; are you the mongoose under the house, come to take down the snake?”

He slides three fingers into his own mouth while he awaits Will’s answer, wetting them thoroughly before pulling them out, pressing his index finger between his cheeks and gliding it across his entrance, spreading the fluid.

“I haven’t decided yet whether the snake is friend or foe. But I’m hoping it won’t end in total bloodshed.”

“Natural enemies turned allies?” Hannibal slips his middle finger in, going slow but steady until he bottoms out, the webbing between his fingers stretched taut against his rim. He lets out a little sigh of contentment, he’s always rather enjoyed the act of fingering or being fingered, the intimacy it implies. He can understand why Will would abstain from it this first time, when his anger is still simmering like flint and woodsmoke along the surface of his skin and his eyes are rolling like waves in a storm.

“Are you an ally?” Will asks, his brow twitching skeptically as he holds Hannibal’s gaze intently, refusing to drop his eyes to witness what’s happening in his very own lap.

“I’m your husband,” Hannibal reminds him on a sigh as he sinks a second finger inside, stilling for a moment as he pulls in a steadying breath and then begins the slow stroke and spread of fingers to encourage his muscles to go lax.

Will gives a soft huff at that, “The secrets of spouses generally fall more into the realm of cheating on a diet, or making an impromptu purchase without discussing it first. An entire *identity* generally doesn’t slot into that category, especially one that slaughters and devours their prey.”

Hannibal pauses in his ministrations, his throat feeling oddly tight as he examines the darkening of Will’s eyes. “What is it you’re trying to imply, Will?”

“Agreeing to marry me...playing the doting husband...was it all just part of your game for me? Was there a time before now, before you knew you could find acceptance with me - *true* acceptance - that you ever actually wanted all this?” His tone is soft disbelief, and slices straight through Hannibal’s chest. Even as he speaks his doubts, Will’s hands move from the arms of the chair to rest upon Hannibal’s hips.

“All and more, dear Will,” Hannibal assures him, leaning forward to press their lips together earnestly. Will sighs into the kiss, and Hannibal deepens it briefly before pulling back to capture Will’s gaze once more. “I saw you the moment I met you, knew there was a predator which could match my own ferocity trapped within you, locked away. In the beginning, I wished to view you as a lingering amusement, a game to be played as I attempted to pry apart the bars on your self-constructed cage in order to free the beast within.”

Hannibal admits this all openly, and he’s happy to find he can combat Will’s accusing and annoyed glare by wrapping his free hand around Will’s straining erection and stroking slowly. “I could only pretend for so long before I was forced to confront that which had always been

deemed an impossibility to me. Not only did I not want to play with you, I *cared* for you. From that moment on I could do nothing else but focus my energies on bringing us together, finding a more gentle way to allow you to see and accept *yourself* so you could do so for me as well."

Will releases a shaky breath and bites back a groan, though Hannibal knows he's affected by his touch as his hips twitch up into his grip seemingly of their own volition. "You...you engineered it all, didn't you? The sudden but *insurmountable* issues with your green card. The fed that just *happened* to be informing you about them during my scheduled session time," Will's brows furrowed, and for the first time since they'd seemingly decided to rip all ghastly truths out of the shadows and into the light, appears *wounded* by the manipulation.

"No, no, that agent was completely legitimate," Hannibal assures him, holding Will's cock in place as he lines himself up and begins the slow slide down his shaft. The scant amount of saliva and Will's pre-come isn't enough to make the going easy, but Hannibal persists all the same, greedy to have Will lay claim to this last bit of himself.

Will's eyes are drawn down with Hannibal's stilted breath, growing impossibly darker with arousal as he watches himself disappear into the depths of his husband, and Hannibal decides to take a chance and seizes the spirit of the evening, clearing any and all air between them. "Of course, he did ring me back the following week to apologize profusely for the clerical error that sent him to me in the first place."

Will's grip tightens on his hips as his eyes pull back up to Hannibal's, a cold fury brewing in the icy depths of his crystalline blue irises. He holds Hannibal's gaze sternly and his hips buck up almost *punishingly,* forcing himself into Hannibal until he's buried to the hilt and there's nothing more between them. With nothing more to do with them, Hannibal's hands take to tracking the contours of Will's abdomen and chest, mapping every inch of him eagerly, as though he may not get another chance.

From Will's reaction to this latest revelation, that concept might not be far off.

"The following week," Will repeats flatly, his nostrils flaring with annoyance as he stares Hannibal down. "As in a solid *three weeks* before we were *actually and legally married."*

"Yes, I'd have liked to get on with it all sooner myself, but the court had concerns over your consent regarding your mental faculties being impacted by your condition -"

Will's hands dart to both of Hannibal's wrists, stilling all movement with his bruising grip as he stares him down, voice tight and jaw clenched. "You let me think you *needed* me. That you had no other choice."

Hannibal doesn't flinch at the accusation in Will's voice, but it's a near thing. He'd thought himself long incapable of feeling shame, but he feels Will's hurt like it's his own, and it shifts something loose inside him. He dips his face closer to Will's and murmurs across strained lips, "I *do* need you, Will. I always have. There *is* no other choice, because there is no other soul in this world that could exist conjoined with my own. No one that could see me and still care for me as you do."

Will's movement is sudden and unexpected, and Hannibal knows he could resist and deflect the attack against him, but chooses very purposefully not to. So when Will lunges forward with a snarl, throwing his weight into Hannibal's and sending them both crashing to the ground, Hannibal willingly and gladly allows the manipulation and takes the brunt of the impact as the two of them tumble to the ground.

Will is dislodged from him with the sudden movement, but his spouse is quick to correct this failure, giving no time for Hannibal to even catch his breath before he's seizing him by the hips and pulling him forward, looping his arms beneath Hannibal's legs to haul them higher, to rest over his shoulders -

And then he's in him again, thrusting with a brutal mindlessness that has Hannibal keening and clawing at the parquet flooring beneath him for a purchase he doesn't truly wish to find.

Will is violent, animalistic as he mounts Hannibal, pushing him into the floor and pinning him with his weight. He fucks into him with a singular focus, intent on his own pleasure, Hannibal's enjoyment a mere afterthought. It pulls a moan from Hannibal's throat, and he goes lax beneath Will, letting his heels hang over his shoulders, beating a cadence against his upper back as he pounds desperately into Hannibal's all too willing body.

"Fuck, Hannibal." Will grits the words out between bone-white teeth, clenched tightly together in his desirous state, and Hannibal *wants*. He wants Will's teeth in his throat and his claws in his hips and his cock moving inside him. Luckily, it appears his beloved darling wants those things as well, the other man bending low to lick at the sweat gathering on Hannibal's jaw, teeth grazing his skin before sinking in.

He doesn't draw blood, but when he pulls away Hannibal can see his eyes have grown impossibly darker, the desire for *more* just as apparent in his gaze as Hannibal is certain it is in his own. His head falls back against the hardwood, and he lets himself drift for a while, enjoying the simple pleasure of Will filling him up so perfectly, his cock deep, keeping him full and spread open.

"Darling Will, I never could entirely predict you." He wants to say more, wants to plead for Will to pour all of his aggression into him, to fuck him fast and hard and viciously, but he's certain his desire for more of Will's cruelness would only spur the ornery man to softness instead.

"I see you, Hannibal. Maybe I always have and just didn't want to admit it until -" he groans as Hannibal clenches around him, trying to pull him deeper. Will puts a hand to Hannibal's throat, not squeezing, just applying pressure like a steel band. If they were animals it would be enough to keep Hannibal still, pliant, placative. But they aren't animals; they are men with monsters dwelling in the halls of their minds, and the action only spurs Hannibal to push up against the hold.

Will's eyes flash dangerously, and a smirk pulls up his lips. "I know what you want, *husband,* and I won't give it to you. You'll take me just like this or not at all." Will slows his pace from the fever pitch of before into a slow, halting grind. He still keeps Hannibal full and speared on his cock, but he's no longer hammering into his prostate or bruising his back against the floorboards.

Hannibal won't beg, he *won't,* but it's a near thing. He snarls instead, gnashing his teeth at nothing and capturing Will's gaze with his own. "Yeah I think I'll keep you just like this. Nice and full of me and, most of all, *quiet."* Will taunts, dipping low to lick at a peaked nipple, dragging his teeth over it torturously slowly and so tenderly it nearly aches.

Hannibal arches into the touch instinctively, arousal clenching painfully in his gut as he's teased mercilessly by Will's slow, smooth thrusts, his ire building when he feels his husband's mouth twitching into a grin against his chest.

"Now, darling, what sort of husband would I be if I didn't see you fulfilled? I promise we'll get there, just want to take my time with you. Really *get to know you."* Will's words are a tease, meant to incense Hannibal, reduce him to nothing more than a mindless beast; stripping him of his usual perfect control.

A growl catches in Hannibal's throat and he feels lost to his desire, this hollow aching need overwhelming his senses. "Will -"

He's interrupted once again by his smug, grinning husband as he places a warm palm, calloused with years of work on boat motors and holding fishing rods, over Hannibal's mouth, silencing him. His eyes are the murky blue of the dark, still waters of a placid lake before an alligator surfaces to swallow you whole, the blue nothing more than a thin line left to ring the ink-spill black of his blown pupils.

Will is just as affected as Hannibal, and Hannibal can't help the smirk that comes to his own lips at that knowledge. He bucks up into Will's next slow grind down, huffs against the palm still pressed tightly to his mouth as Will's eyes blaze and then grow impossibly darker, dark enough Hannibal can almost imagine he sees himself reflected back in them.

As Will is trying to adjust his posture, thrown slightly off balance by Hannibal's movement, Hannibal seizes the opportunity to gain the upper hand, wraps his strong thighs around Will's hips and *flips them,* Will only leaving him for seconds before Hannibal has managed to sink back down onto his cock. Will is now the one pressed firmly to the floor against his back, Hannibal's feet tucked beneath his lover's knees to keep him pulled close and where he wants him.

He tosses his head back, moaning shamelessly now that his mouth is free again to do so. He puts one hand to Will's throat, just to feel the fluttering beat of his pulse against the thin skin, and the other he uses to stabilize himself, placing it atop Will's upper thigh and clutching him tight.

Will's hands fly to Hannibal's hips, but he doesn't attempt to halt him or dislodge him in any way. Rather, his fingers wrap around the jut of bone, nails digging mercilessly into his flesh, and move to match Hannibal's rhythm, encouraging it with an enthusiastic roll of his own hips.

"Will." Hannibal will never admit that the name is pulled from his throat on a whimper, his breath catching as the man beneath him angles his cock expertly to drive straight into Hannibal's prostate even from a position with such little leverage.

“That’s right, darlin’,” Will purrs, his own voice strained and seeping from the clutch Hannibal still has on his throat. “My sneaky, conniving husband. Come for me, baby.”

The words are all but a command, driven into Hannibal quite literally as Will grips his hips tighter still and bucks up into him so perfectly, his pace frantic and demanding. His hips only falter when Hannibal seizes up around him and curls in on himself as much as he can manage while still maintaining his balance. He gasps and spasms around the thick cock filling him, his own cock, as yet untouched, spilling his release between them.

He only just retains enough coherency to remove his hand from Will’s throat as he comes, dragging his nails down his beloved’s chest harshly rather than irrevocably tightening around his airway. The hand gripping Will’s thigh clenches unbidden as well, and the scent of copper bursts into his senses just as Will moans and begins to pulse his own release where he’s still buried deep inside him.

Hannibal stills all movement as they both begin to come down from the spiral of their shared pleasure, though he doesn’t bother moving from his position astride Will even as his husband begins to soften inside him. Instead, he leans low, the harsh grip of his hands turning to gentle pets as he seeks Will’s lips breathlessly.

“I think I could be married to you for a hundred years,” he murmurs against his beloved’s mouth between soft, lazy kisses, “and find that you never cease to surprise me.”

Will’s near-silent huff of laughter ghosts warmly over Hannibal’s mouth before he tips his head up for another kiss. “I think I wouldn’t last *five* if that weren’t the case.”

“There’s not a thing about you I don’t adore,” Hannibal admits softly.

Will’s lips twist into a wry smirk, his brows dipping into a near-frown. “Wish I could say the same, but you’re a huge pain in my ass.”

“I enjoy keeping you on your toes,” Hannibal deflects easily, and Will gives another breathless huff of sardonic laughter.

“You enjoy fucking with everyone around you, your own *husband* not excluded. You know, we *are* eventually going to have to talk about Abigail. You can’t keep distracting me with sentiments and sex.”

“I realize that,” Hannibal admits. He breathes a dejected sigh as Will slips from him completely, but relishes in the sensation of his husband’s seed following, reminding him once more that their union has finally been consummated, that Will has claimed him in the most primal of ways.

“And your little lie of *omission,”* Will adds, scowling up at him even as his hands continue to stroke fondly down Hannibal’s sides. “I haven’t forgotten that you basically *tricked me* into marrying you, Hannibal.”

Hannibal stills completely, gazing down at Will, searching almost desperately for any tell he might provide when he asks, “But do you regret the outcome?”

Will scowls at him, his own body growing still as well; his hands burn where they rest lightly against Hannibal's hips, searing his flesh even more noticeably than when his nails had driven crescent moons into the sensitive skin there. "See, there's where I have a problem. Because if I say *no,* you're going to think you can get away with this shit all the time."

Will heaves a sigh, his stern expression shattering into something almost painfully fond as he raises a hand to cup Hannibal's jaw. "And if I say *yes,* we'll both know I'm lying."

Hannibal's heart begins beating again for the first time in what feels like minutes. "A quandary indeed. How then, will you respond?"

Will gives a lazy roll of his hips and pats at Hannibal's thigh, signalling silently for him to remove himself. His soft, kiss-swollen lips twist into a smirk, his crystalline eyes shining with mirth. "Dunno yet. Why don't you go cook us up something while I think about it?"

He's not ready to remove his weight from Will, not ready for his husband to have the chance to put distance between them, should he choose to do so. "Any requests in the way of fare?"

"Chef's choice," Will purrs, his smirk pulling into an all-out grin as he adds, "Though I'm familiar enough with your butcher to know it's probably going to be some form of pork."

Hannibal leans down to taste the curve of his mouth, to drink down the joy erupting from it. He doesn't get a chance to make it home and start dinner for another hour.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading and for sticking with us! Just two more this year and we can't believe what an amazing journey it has been. We wrote over half a million words this year and are hoping to double that next year! Come hang out with us on Twitter (@Bellarai) for updates about our writing as well as to follow our entry into original fiction publishing!

Up next week: The final planned chapter of Sugar Bowl! Will has to overcome one of his worst fears.

End Notes

Thanks for reading!

If you enjoy our collaborative works you should follow us on Twitter and Tumblr for all sorts of extra content and teasers!

We also have a Discord server where you can chat with us, throw us prompts, and post images/art inspired by our work! You may also catch a snippet or two of some WIPs! DM us on Twitter for details!

'Til next time! 💚 💜 BellaRai

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